



World Refugee Day Message
By High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres.

This is a time of enormous global uncertainty, but especially so for tens of millions of refugees and displaced people uprooted by conflict and persecution. They have lost not only their livelihoods and their homes, but their loved ones, their friends, their communities, their countries.

On this World Refugee Day, let us remember that the millions of people cared for by the UN refugee agency and our partners are among the most vulnerable on Earth. Each and every one of them has a very human story to tell. Refugees are not faceless statistics – they are real people just like you and me who through no fault of their own have lost everything.

In these difficult times, those of us who work with refugees are struggling more than ever to meet even their most basic needs. The sobering reality is that there are substantial gaps in our ability to provide them with essentials such as shelter, health, education, nutrition, sanitation and protection from violence and abuse.

As UN High Commissioner for Refugees, it's my job to do everything I can to ensure that those basic needs are met. But a recent UNHCR survey shows that a startling number remain unmet.

In Cameroon, for example, refugee children from the Central African Republic suffer mortality rates in some areas seven times higher than the emergency level. Less than a third of refugee girls are in school.

In Ecuador, many uprooted Colombians are totally unaware of their right to seek asylum, while thousands live in remote areas and are afraid to come forward. Indigenous people and single women and girls are particularly prone to exploitation and abuse.

In Georgia, people who have been internally displaced for 15 years continue to live in squalid, overcrowded collective centers lacking water, insulation from the cold and functioning sewage systems.

In Thailand, more than 100,000 Myanmar refugees and asylum seekers have lived for years in crowded camps amid enormous frustration that leads to domestic violence and other abuses.

With adequate resources, many of these ills can be eliminated or minimized. But without that support, we are forced daily to make heart-breaking decisions that directly affect the lives and well-being of the millions of uprooted families we are charged with protecting.

So on this World Refugee Day, let us remember that refugees too are real people with real needs. Helping them to rebuild their lives and their communities benefits us all.